



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

DEFENDANT PLEADS GUILTY IN EASTERN EUROPEAN EMPLOYEE LEASING SCAM

MIAMI- A Florida resident originally from Poland has pleaded guilty to three charges related to a nationwide employee leasing conspiracy that used hundreds of illegal aliens, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney R. Alexander Acosta of the Southern District of Florida announced today.

Pavel Preus, 39, of Pompano Beach, Florida, pleaded guilty yesterday before U.S. District Judge Kenneth Marra at the federal courthouse in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Preus, a native of Poland, holds conditional lawful permanent residency in the United States.

Preus pleaded guilty to conspiracy to induce and encourage aliens to enter and remain unlawfully in the United States for commercial advantage, conspiracy to transport and conceal aliens in the United States for commercial advantage, and conspiracy to cause the making of false statements to government agencies; conspiracy to commit money laundering; and conspiracy to defraud the United States of taxes due.

Preus faces a maximum sentence of up to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$500,000 on the money laundering charge, and up to five years in prison and fines of up to \$250,000 on the other counts. Sentencing is scheduled for Nov. 21, 2005.

From 1995 to the present, Preus conspired to provide unauthorized workers, mostly Eastern Europeans who had entered the United States on tourist visas, to American companies with which Preus and others had contracted to provide authorized foreign workers. During the course of the conspiracy, Preus and his co-conspirators failed to collect and pay approximately \$6 million in federal payroll taxes and laundered in excess of \$20 million.

“This defendant constructed an elaborate fraud with others which involved misrepresenting the visa status of hundreds of aliens, taking advantage of laws designed to secure opportunity for legitimate immigrant workers, and defrauding the American public of millions of dollars in revenue,” said Assistant Attorney General Fisher. “The Department of Justice is committed to the vigorous prosecution of this defendant and others who believe that they can cheat the system by circumventing immigration laws for profit.”

United States Attorney R. Alexander Acosta added, “Our nation has been built on the sweat and dreams of immigrants. Lawful immigration remains part of the American Dream. Our nation, however, also has been built on the rule of law. We will prosecute violations of immigration laws vigorously.”

Preus’ plea is the first in the culmination of Operation Pisces, an investigation begun in 2002 and led by the Kansas City Office of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (then the INS); the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Inspector General, Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations; and the Miami, Florida, field office of the Internal Revenue Service, and joined by the Miami division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

The case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Michael E. Barr and Judith R. O’Sullivan of the Department of Justice’s Criminal Division, Domestic Security Section, and by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeffrey H. Kay of the Ft. Lauderdale office of the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.